

# I Have Diabetes: What Should I Eat?



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# How Can I Control My Diabetes?

You can help control your blood sugar (also called blood glucose) and diabetes when you eat healthy, get enough exercise, and stay at a healthy weight.

A healthy weight also helps you control your blood fats and lower your blood pressure.

Many people with diabetes also need to take medicine to help control their blood sugar.



Healthy Eating

+



Exercise

=

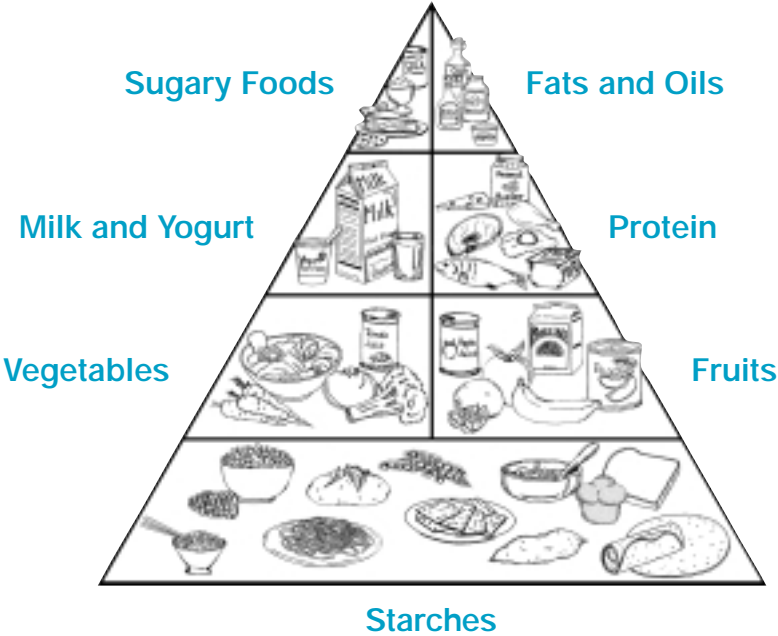
Diabetes  
Control



1. How much do you weigh? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is a healthy weight for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Ask your doctor or diabetes teacher if you don't know.)
3. Do you need to lose weight? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are two food habits you can change to get to or stay at a healthier weight? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you exercise? **Yes** or **No** (circle one)
6. If you exercise, what do you do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. How often do you exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How many minutes do you exercise each time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you need to exercise more? **Yes** or **No** (circle one)
10. What are two changes you can make to get more exercise?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# How Can I Eat Healthy?

Using the food pyramid helps you eat a variety of healthy foods. When you eat different foods, you get the vitamins and minerals you need.

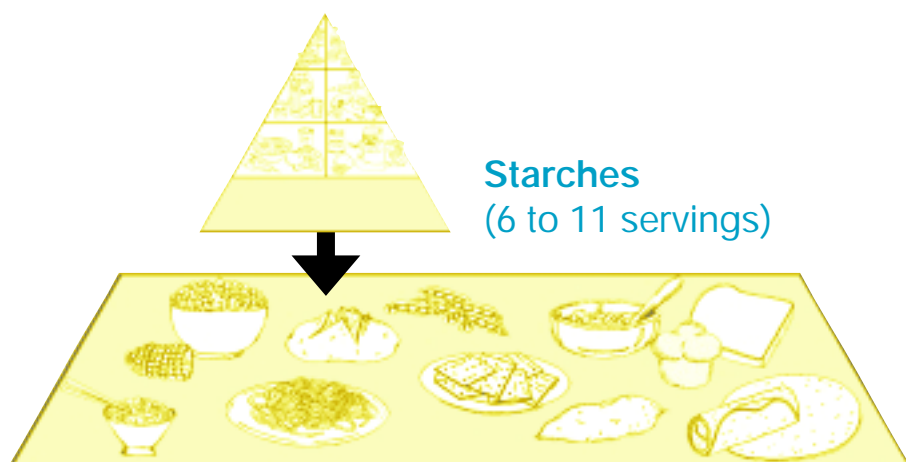


Eat different foods from each group each day. See how to do this in the example below.

	Day 1	Day 2
<b>Fruit:</b>	apple orange	banana mango
<b>Vegetable:</b>	broccoli	salad green beans

# What Are Starches?

Starches are bread, grains, cereal, pasta, or starchy vegetables. Eat some starches at each meal. People might tell you not to eat many starches, but that is no longer correct advice. Eating starches is healthy for everyone, including people with diabetes.



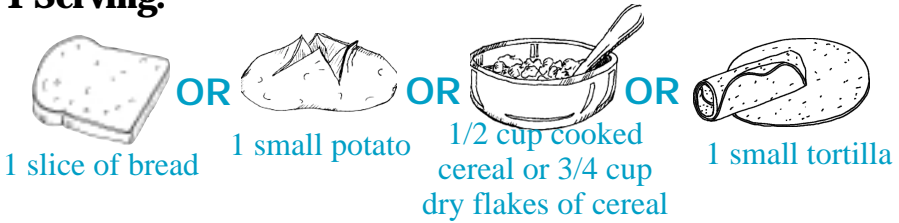
The number of servings you should eat each day depends on

- The calories you need.
- Your diabetes treatment plan.

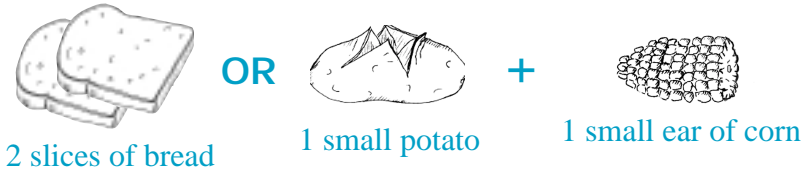
Starches give your body energy, vitamins and minerals, and fiber. Whole grain starches are healthier because they have more vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Fiber helps you have regular bowel movements.

# How Much Is a Serving of Starch?

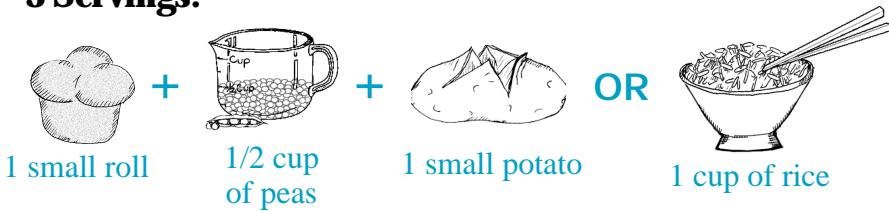
## 1 Serving:



## 2 Servings:



## 3 Servings:



You might need to eat one, two, or three starch servings at a meal. If you need to eat more than one serving at a meal, choose several different starches or have two or three servings of one starch.

# What Are Healthier Ways to Buy, Cook, and Eat Starches?

- Buy whole grain breads and cereals.
- Eat fewer fried and high-fat starches such as regular tortilla chips and potato chips, french fries, pastries, biscuits, or muffins.
- Use low-fat or fat-free yogurt or fat-free sour cream instead of regular sour cream on a baked potato.
- Use mustard instead of mayonnaise on a sandwich.
- Use the low-fat or fat-free substitutes such as low-fat mayonnaise or light margarine on bread, rolls, or toast.
- Use vegetable oil spray instead of oil, shortening, butter, or margarine.
- Cook or eat cereal with fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk.
- Use no-sugar jelly, low-fat or fat-free cottage cheese, nonfat yogurt, or salsa.





1. What starches do you eat? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What starches do you like best? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do you cook and eat starches? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Name two starch servings you might choose for  
breakfast: \_\_\_\_\_  
dinner: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Write down two things you can do to buy,  
cook, or eat starches in healthier ways.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# What Are Vegetables?

Vegetables are healthy for everyone, including people with diabetes. Eat raw and cooked vegetables every day. Vegetables give you vitamins, minerals, and fiber, with very few calories.



The number of servings you should eat each day depends on

- The calories you need.
- How you take care of your diabetes.

# How Much Is a Serving of Vegetables?

## 1 Serving:



1/2 cup carrots

OR



1/2 cup cooked green beans

## 2 Servings:



1/2 cup carrots

+



1 cup salad

OR



1/2 cup vegetable juice

+



1/2 cup cooked green beans

## 3 Servings:



1/2 cup cooked greens

+



1/2 cup cooked green beans and 1 small tomato

OR



1/2 cup broccoli

+



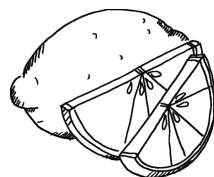
1 cup tomato sauce

You might need to eat one, two, or three vegetable servings at a meal. If you need to eat more than one serving at a meal, choose a few different types of vegetables or have two or three servings of one vegetable.

# What Are Healthier Ways To Buy, Cook, and Eat Vegetables?

Eat raw and cooked vegetables with little or no fat. You can cook and eat vegetables without any fat.

- Try low-fat or fat-free salad dressing on raw vegetables or salads.
- Steam vegetables using a small amount of water or low-fat broth.
- Mix in some chopped onion or garlic.
- Use a little vinegar or some lemon or lime juice.
- Add a small piece of lean ham or smoked turkey.
- Sprinkle with herbs and spices. These flavorings add almost no fat or calories.



If you do use a small amount of fat, use canola oil, olive oil, or tub margarine instead of fat from meat, butter, or shortening.





1. What raw vegetables do you eat?

---

---

2. What cooked vegetables do you eat?

---

---

3. What vegetables do you like best?

---

---

4. How do you cook and eat vegetables?

---

---

5. Name two vegetable servings you might choose for lunch: \_\_\_\_\_

dinner: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Write down two things you can do to buy, cook, or eat vegetables in healthier ways.

---

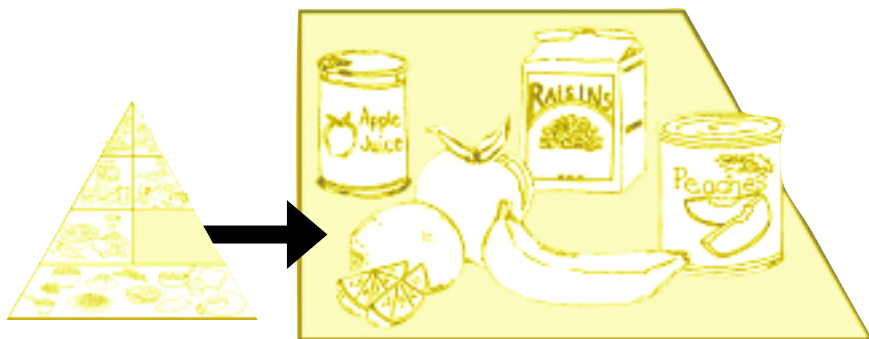
---

---

# What Are Fruits?

Fruit is healthy for everyone, including people with diabetes. Fruit gives you energy, vitamins and minerals, and fiber.

**Fruits**  
(2 to 4 servings)



The number of servings you should eat each day depends on

- The calories you need.
- How you take care of your diabetes.

# How Much Is a Serving of Fruit?

## 1 Serving:



1 small  
apple

OR



1/2 cup juice

OR



1/2 grapefruit

## 2 Servings:



1 banana

OR



1/2 cup  
orange juice

+



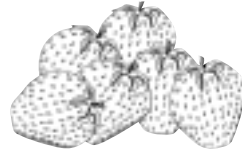
1 1/4 cup whole  
strawberries

You might need to eat one or two fruit servings at a meal. If you need to eat more than one serving at a meal, choose different types of fruits or have two servings of one fruit.

# How Should I Eat Fruit?

Eat fruits raw, as juice with no sugar added, canned in their own juice, or dried.

- Buy smaller pieces of fruit.
- Eat pieces of fruit rather than drinking fruit juice. Pieces of fruit are more filling.
- Buy fruit juice that is 100-percent juice with no added sugar.
- Drink fruit juice in small amounts.
- Save high-sugar and high-fat fruit desserts such as peach cobbler or cherry pie for special occasions.





1. What fruits do you eat? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What fruits do you like best? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How do you buy and eat fruits?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Name two fruit servings you might choose for  
breakfast: \_\_\_\_\_  
dinner: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Write down two things you can do to buy,  
cook, or eat fruits in healthier ways.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

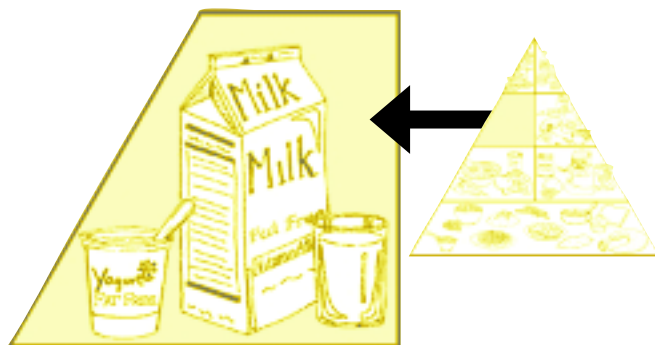


# What Are Milk and Yogurt Foods?

Fat-free and low-fat milk and yogurt are healthy for everyone, including people with diabetes. Milk and yogurt give you energy, protein, calcium, vitamin A, and other vitamins and minerals.

Drink fat-free (skim or nonfat) or low-fat (1%) milk each day. Eat low-fat or fat-free yogurt. They have less total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.

## Milk and Yogurt (2 to 3 servings)



The number of servings you should eat each day depends on

- The calories you need.
- How you take care of your diabetes.

**Note:** If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, eat four to five servings of milk and yogurt each day.

# How Much Is a Serving of Milk and Yogurt?

**1 Serving:**



1 cup fat-free  
plain yogurt

OR



1 cup  
skim milk

1. Do you eat milk and yogurt? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What types of milk and yogurt do you buy?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Name one milk or yogurt serving you might choose for

breakfast: \_\_\_\_\_

dinner: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Write down two things you can do to buy, cook, or eat milk or yogurt in healthier ways.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

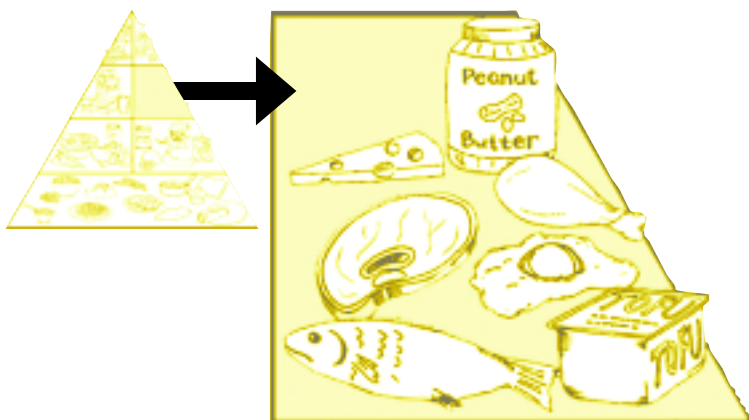


# What Are Protein Foods?

Protein foods are meat, poultry, eggs, cheese, fish, and tofu. Eat small amounts of some of these foods each day.

Protein foods help your body build tissue and muscles. They also give your body vitamins and minerals.

**Protein**  
(2 to 3 servings)



The number of servings you should eat each day depends on

- The calories you need.
- How you take care of your diabetes.

# How Much Is a Serving of Protein Food?

## 1 Serving:



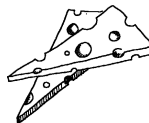
2 to 3 ounces of  
cooked fish

OR



2 to 3 ounces of  
cooked chicken

OR



2 ounces  
of cheese

OR



4 ounces  
(1/2 cup)  
of tofu

The serving size you eat now may be too big.

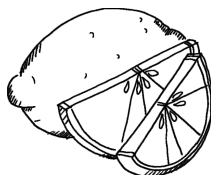
One serving should weigh between 2 and 3 ounces after cooking, about the size of a deck of cards.

# What Are Healthier Ways To Buy, Cook, and Eat Protein Foods?

- Buy cuts of beef, pork, ham, and lamb that have only a little fat on them. Trim off extra fat.
- Eat chicken or turkey without the skin.
- Cook protein foods in low-fat ways:
  - Broil.
  - Grill.
  - Stir-fry.
  - Roast.
  - Steam.
  - Stew.



- To add more flavor, use vinegars, lemon juice, soy or teriyaki sauce, salsa, ketchup, barbecue sauce, and herbs and spices.
- Cook eggs with a small amount of fat.
- Eat small amounts of nuts, peanut butter, fried chicken, fish, or shellfish. They are high in fat.





1. What protein foods do you eat? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What protein foods do you like best? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What cuts of beef, pork and ham, and lamb do you buy? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you cook your meats, poultry, fish, and eggs? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Name one protein food serving you might choose for  
lunch: \_\_\_\_\_  
dinner: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Write down two things you can do to buy, cook, or eat protein foods in healthier ways.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

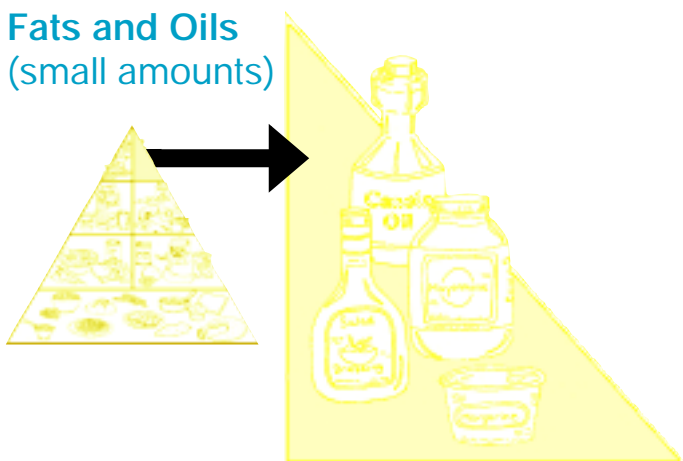
# What Are Fats and Oils?

You find the fats and oils section at the tip of the pyramid. This tells you to eat small amounts of fats and oils because they have lots of calories. Some fats and oils also contain saturated fats and cholesterol that are not good for you.

You also get fat from other foods such as meats and some dairy foods.

High-fat food is tempting. But eating small amounts of high-fat food will help you lose weight, keep your blood sugar and blood fats under control, and lower your blood pressure.

**Fats and Oils**  
(small amounts)



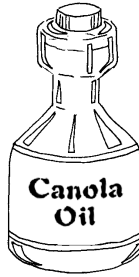
# How Much Is a Serving of Fat or Oil?

## 1 Serving:



1 strip of bacon

OR



1 teaspoon oil

## 2 Servings:



1 tablespoon  
regular salad dressing

OR



2 tablespoons  
light salad dressing

+



1 tablespoon  
light mayonnaise

Your meals may include one or two servings of fat.





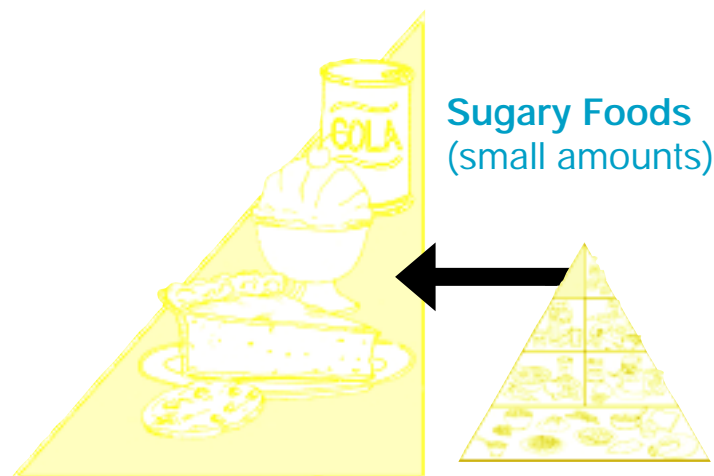
1. What high-fat foods do you eat? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What fats do you use when you cook? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What fats do you use on foods when you eat them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What two changes can you make to buy lower fat foods? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Name one fat or oil serving you might choose for  
lunch: \_\_\_\_\_  
dinner: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Write down two things you can do to buy, cook, or eat less fat. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## What Are Sugary Foods?

You find the sugary foods and sweets section at the tip of the pyramid. This tells you to eat small amounts of sugary foods.

Sugary foods have calories and do not have much nutrition. Sugary foods have lots of calories. Some sugary foods are also high in fat—like cakes, pies, and cookies. They also may contain saturated fats and cholesterol.

Sugary foods and sweets are tempting. But eating small amounts of sugary foods will help you lose weight, keep your blood sugar under control, control your blood fats, and lower your blood pressure.



# How Much Is a Serving of Sugary Foods and Sweets?

## 1 Serving:



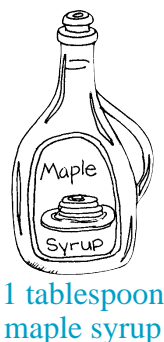
OR



OR



OR



Once in a while you can eat a serving of a sugary food. Talk to your diabetes teacher about how to fit sugary foods into your meal plan.



1. What sugary foods do you eat?

---

---

2. What are your favorite sugary foods?

---

3. What two changes can you make to eat fewer sugary foods?

---

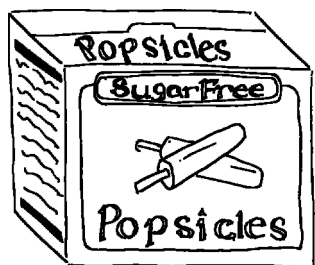
---

# How Can I Satisfy My Sweet Tooth?

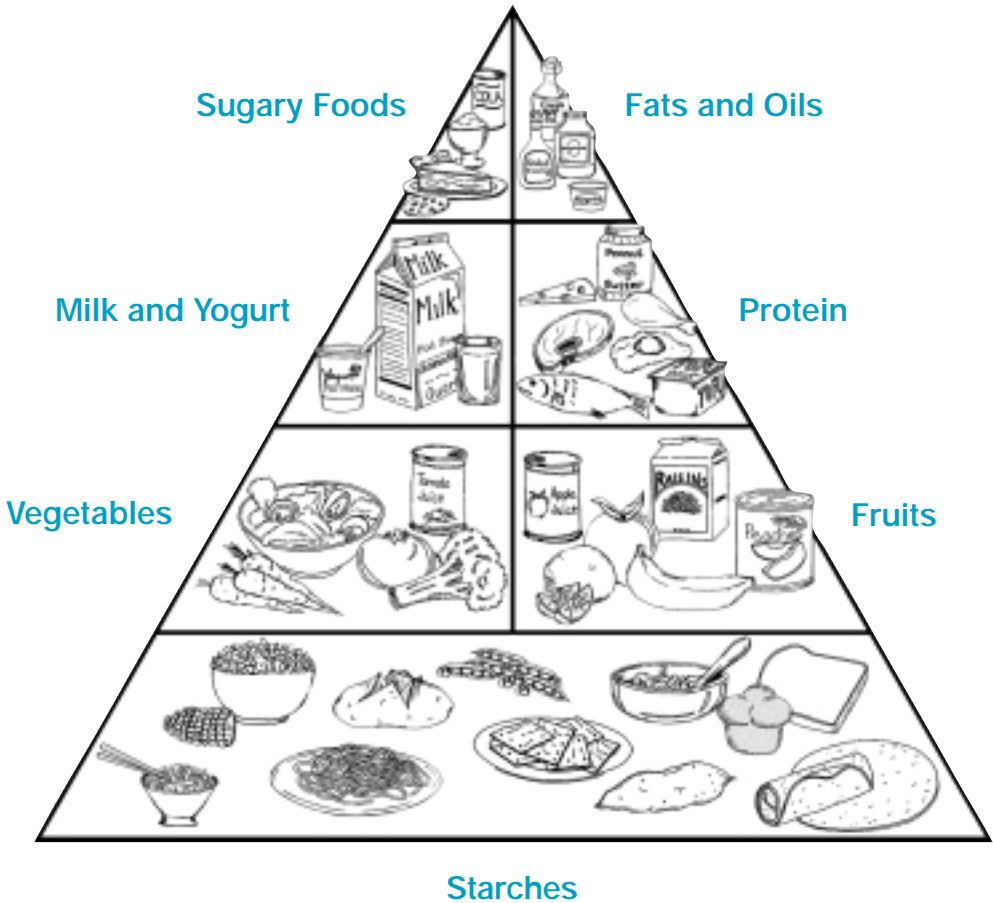
Eat a serving of sugar-free popsicles, diet soda, fat-free ice cream or yogurt, or sugar-free hot cocoa mix once in a while.



Remember, fat-free and low-sugar foods still have some calories. Eat them as part of your meal plan.



# The Food Pyramid



## Points To Remember

To follow a healthy eating plan

- Choose foods from all six food groups each day.
- Eat a wide variety of foods from each group to get all your vitamins and minerals.
- Eat enough starches, vegetables, fruits, and low-fat milk and yogurt.
- Eat smaller amounts of lower fat protein foods.
- Eat fewer fats, oils, and sugary foods.

# How To Find More Help

**Diabetes Teachers** (nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, and other health professionals)

- To find a diabetes teacher near you, call the American Association of Diabetes Educators toll-free at 1-800-TEAMUP4 (1-800-832-6874).

## **Recognized Diabetes Education Programs**

(teaching programs approved by the American Diabetes Association)

- To find a program near you, call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or look at its Internet home page < <http://www.diabetes.org> > and click on “Diabetes Info.”

## **Dietitians**

- To find a dietitian near you, call The American Dietetic Association’s National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics at 1-800-366-1655 or look at its Internet home page < <http://www.eatright.org> > and click on “Find a Dietitian.”



# Acknowledgments

The individuals listed here provided editorial guidance or facilitated field testing for this publication. The National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse would like to thank these individuals for their contributions.

American Association  
of Diabetes  
Educators  
Chicago, IL

Shelly Amos, L.R.D.  
Nez Percé Nutrition  
Lapwai, ID

Noreen Cohen,  
M.S., R.D., L.D.  
Humana Health  
Care Plans  
San Antonio, TX

Paula Dubcak,  
R.N., C.D.E.  
Humana Health  
Care Plans  
San Antonio, TX

Lois Exelbert,  
R.N., M.S.,  
C.D.E., A.C.C.E.  
Joslin Center  
for Diabetes  
Baptist Hospital  
of Miami  
Miami, FL

Ruth Farkas-Hirsch,  
R.N., M.S., C.D.E.  
(on behalf of American  
Diabetes Association)  
University of  
Washington,  
Diabetes Care Center  
Seattle, WA

Lawana Geren,  
R.N., C.D.E.  
Humana Health  
Care Plans  
San Antonio, TX

Gwen Hosey,  
M.S., A.N.P., C.D.E.  
IHS Portland Area  
Diabetes Program  
at Washington  
Bellingham, WA

Joslin Center  
for Diabetes  
Community  
Medical Center  
Toms River, NJ

Melinda Maryniuk,  
M.Ed., R.D., C.D.E.  
Joslin Diabetes Center  
Boston, MA

Pat Mathis,  
M.S., R.N., C.D.E.  
Marianne Sack,  
R.N., C.D.E.  
So Others Might Eat  
Washington, DC

Kathy O'Keeffe, M.S.,  
R.D., L.D., C.D.E.  
Carolina Diabetes  
and Kidney Center  
Sumter, SC

Carolyn Ross,  
R.D., M.S., C.D.E.  
PHS Indian Hospital  
Cass Lake, MN

Lisa Spence, M.S.  
Purdue University  
West Lafayette, IN

Judy Tomassene,  
M.P.H., M.S., R.D.  
Seattle Indian  
Health Board  
Seattle, WA

Madelyn L. Wheeler,  
M.S., R.D.,  
F.A.D.A., C.D.E.  
Indiana University  
School of Medicine  
Diabetes Research  
and Training Center  
Indianapolis, IN



# National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse

1 Information Way  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3560  
Tel: (301) 654-3327  
Fax: (301) 907-8906  
E-mail: [ndic@info.niddk.nih.gov](mailto:ndic@info.niddk.nih.gov)

The National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health under the U.S. Public Health Service. Established in 1978, the clearinghouse provides information about diabetes to people with diabetes and to their families, health care professionals, and the public. NDIC answers inquiries; develops, reviews, and distributes publications; and works closely with professional and patient organizations and Government agencies to coordinate resources about diabetes.

Publications produced by the clearinghouse are carefully reviewed for scientific accuracy, content, and readability.

This publication is not copyrighted. The clearinghouse encourages users of this booklet to duplicate and distribute as many copies as desired.

This publication is also available under  
“Health Information” at [<http://www.niddk.nih.gov>](http://www.niddk.nih.gov).

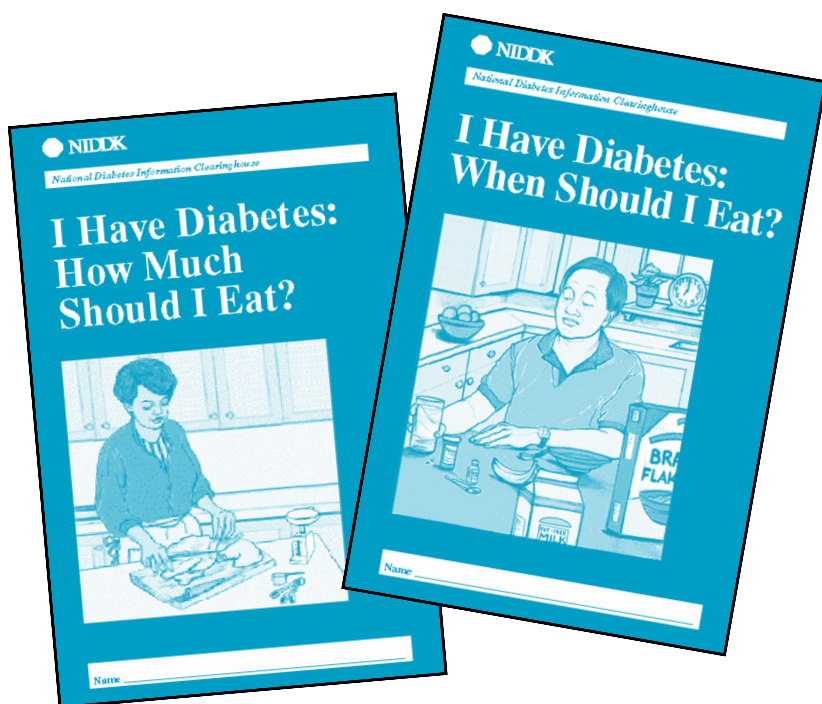


Two other booklets can help you learn more about food and diabetes:

- *I Have Diabetes: How Much Should I Eat?*
- *I Have Diabetes: When Should I Eat?*

For free copies of these booklets:

- Call the National Diabetes Information Clearinghouse (NDIC) at (301) 654-3327.
- Write to NDIC, 1 Information Way, Bethesda, MD 20892-3560.
- E-mail NDIC at <[ndic@info.niddk.nih.gov](mailto:ndic@info.niddk.nih.gov)> .
- Look at these booklets online at <<http://www.niddk.nih.gov>> under “Health Information.”





U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Public Health Service  
National Institutes of Health



**NIDDK**

National Institute of Diabetes and  
Digestive and Kidney Diseases

NIH Publication No. 98-4192  
November 1997